

# Parent Advisors

## Ideas for promoting parent participation

*Hold monthly family/staff coffee hours.*

*Hold family “hosted” professional-in-training dinners.*

*Seek parents input on community and program needs assessment.*

*Include parents as members of site visit teams.*

*Hold brainstorming sessions with families before developing educational materials.*

*Allow families to review drafts of written materials.*

*Convene a Family Panel during orientation for new staff.*

*Pair a parent with a professional in your training activities.*

*Ask families to assist in translating materials.*

*Develop, with families, a parent satisfaction survey.*

*Develop a “Breakfast/lunch with the Director” program for families.*

*Keep a suggestion book in all agency waiting rooms.*

*Ask parents to accompany staff when they meet with funders and community groups.*

*Invite parents to present in-service programs for staff.*

# A Strategy to Partner with Parents

## ***Why do organizations want parent participation...***

Because without shared leadership organizations can create ineffective practices, policies and procedures. Parents bring new insights and knowledge. Their expertise can assist organizations to effectively reach into the community.

## ***Where can organizations find parents...***

Partnerships can begin with resilient families and parents who are successfully coping with stressors as well as with those concerned members of civic, religious and business organizations in a community.

## ***Who benefits from these partnerships....***

Organizations benefit by creating sustainable and integrated service delivery. The philosophy is demonstrated by the success of their programs. Families and parents benefit by gaining and practicing new skills and abilities which affect not only the organization's capacity but that of the larger community as well.



## ***How do you begin...***

- Support staff in developing an understanding of the value of parent participation.
- Develop a plan for identifying parents to participate.
- Ensure diversity among the membership by recruiting broadly from the community the program serves.
- Provide orientation to both family members and staff about issues, participants and process.
- Include parents in your on-going training.
- Provide clear information about the goals of the board, task force or committee and the role of its individual members and of its family members
- Compensate families for time, expertise and expenses
- Provide convenient meeting times and locations
- Provide accurate, timely, clear, jargon-free information prior to meetings.
- Clearly identify a staff person as the primary contact for reimbursement and other issues.
- Provide all materials in the families' preferred languages.
- Match veteran parents with inexperienced family members
- Balance membership on committees with families and professionals.
- Consider shared leadership – parent and professional co-chairs.
- Recognize some family members require more support than others.
- Acknowledge obstacles:  
Child care may be hard to find  
Many families may not have fax machines.  
Many families may rely on public transportation.  
Many families may not have phones.